

**Amendment to the Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A medical imaging apparatus, comprising:

a first CT imaging device for obtaining one or more tomographic images of a subject patient, ~~wherein at least a portion of the first CT imaging device has a~~  
5 having a first housing which defines a bore through which ~~[[a]] the patient axially~~  
~~translates during formation of one or more images by the device;~~

a ~~second~~ nuclear camera imaging device for obtaining one or more tomographic images of the subject patient, ~~wherein at least a portion of the second~~  
10 nuclear camera imaging device ~~has a~~ having a second housing which defines a bore  
through which a patient axially translates during formation of the images by the  
device[;], which the first and second imaging devices, each secured by a housing  
 housings are secured in a fixed position relative to the other during the formation of  
one or more images of the subject patient, ~~wherein~~ in which fixed position the bore of  
each device is substantially aligned axially with the bore of the other; and

the bores of the first CT and ~~second~~ nuclear camera imaging devices are  
15 spaced apart by a distance sufficient to allow direct access by a caregiver to a portion  
of the subject patient[;], which is positioned between the first and second bores  
imaging devices, the spacing between the bores is free of obstructions in a region  
above the subject patient.

2. (Currently Amended) An imaging apparatus having an imaging axis,  
comprising:

[[a]] separatable first and second imaging device devices for obtaining  
one or more images of a patient, wherein the patient is substantially aligned with the  
5 imaging axis;

~~a second imaging device for obtaining one or more images of~~ ~~[[a]] the~~  
~~patient, wherein the patient is substantially aligned with the imaging axis;~~

a first housing which houses the first imaging device and defines a first  
bore; and

10 a second housing which houses the second imaging device and deifnes a  
second bore;

projecting engageable securement structures which extend from at least one of the first housing and the second housing to fixedly attach the first and second imaging devices, each being held in positions fixed relative to abutting each other and  
15 fixed relative to the imaging axis; and

an opening formed between the first and second ~~imaging devices bores~~  
when the first and second housings are abutting through which opening a caregiver  
can have line-of-sight visual contact with ~~[[a]]~~ the patient that is aligned with the  
imaging axis and extends between the first and second imaging devices.

3. (Currently Amended) A medical imaging apparatus, comprising:

a first tomographic medical imaging device having an opening for receipt  
of a subject patient;

a second tomographic medical imaging device having an opening for  
5 receipt of the subject patient;

a patient support structure extending through the openings of the first and second imaging devices during the formation of one or more images by at least one of the imaging devices;

an imaging device support structure securing the openings of the first and  
10 second imaging devices in a fixed spatial relationship ~~[[and]]~~ in alignment with an  
imaging axis during the formation of one or more tomographic images, by at least one  
of the imaging devices, of the subject patient;

~~a patient support structure extending through the openings of the first and second imaging devices during the formation of one or more images by at least one of~~  
15 ~~the imaging devices; and~~

the which imaging device support structure ~~forming~~ forms a patient  
access area between the first and second imaging devices through which a caregiver  
can directly observe the subject patient between the openings of the first and second  
imaging devices; and

20 an arcuate surface which is formed between at least the first and second imaging devices underneath the patient support structure when the imaging devices are secured together.

4. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the patient access area allows direct tactile contact between a caregiver and the subject patient.

5. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the patient access area allows a caregiver to perform one or more interventional applications on the subject patient between the first and second imaging devices.

6. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 5, wherein the patient access area allows a caregiver to perform at least a portion of a biopsy procedure on the subject patient.

7. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the first imaging device comprises one of a group consisting of CT, MRI, X-Ray, and Ultrasound devices.

8. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 3 or 7, wherein the second imaging device comprises one of a group consisting of SPECT and PET devices.

9. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 3, wherein the axes of openings of the first and second imaging devices are substantially aligned.

10. (Currently Amended) ~~[[The]]~~ A medical imaging apparatus of ~~Claim 3, including:~~

a first medical imaging device having a first bore;

a second medical imaging device having a second bore;

5 a patient support structure which supports a subject patient during imaging; and

a support structure for securing the first and second bores in a fixed spatial relationship, which support structure forms a patient access area between the

first and second imaging devices and includes: ~~wherein the imaging device's support structure further comprises:~~

a fluid control surface positioned beneath the patient support structure and between the first and second imaging devices for directing liquids falling onto the surface from the vicinity of the patient support structure away from the subject patient.

11. (Currently Amended) A medical imaging apparatus, comprising:

a housing having a first scanner and a second scanner, each scanner having a bore for obtaining tomographic imaging information from at least a portion of a patient~~[[; the]], which~~ housing ~~positioning positions~~ each of the first and second scanner bores in fixed positions apart from the other during scanning operations~~[[;]]~~ and ~~the housing forming forms~~ a patient access area between the first and second scanners bores to allow direct access by a caregiver to ~~[[a]] the~~ patient extending through the first scanner bore and at least partially positioned between the first and second scanners; and

a substantially continuous arcuate surface which is formed in an axial direction, which arcuate surface has a peak located underneath the patient and extends outwardly and downwardly from the peak and toward lateral sides of the housing.

12. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 11, wherein the bores of the first and second scanners have axes that are substantially aligned.

13. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 11, further comprising a patient support means for supporting and positioning first and second portions of a patient simultaneously within the bores of the first and second scanners, respectively, and for supporting and positioning a third portion of the patient between the bores and accessible to a caregiver through the patient access area.

14. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 11, wherein the first and second scanners are adapted to operate in different modalities with respect to each other.

15. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 14, wherein one of the first and second scanners is adapted to obtain imaging information representing anatomical structures of the patient.

16. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 14 or 15, wherein one of the first and second scanners is adapted to obtain imaging information representing physiologic functions of the patient.

17. (Currently Amended) A medical imaging method, comprising:

providing a housing having a first scanner and a second scanner, each scanner having a bore for obtaining tomographic imaging information from at least a portion of a patient;

5                   positioning each of the first and second scanner bores in fixed positions apart from the other during scanning operations;

forming a patient access area between the first and second scanners bores to allow direct access by a caregiver to a patient extending through the first scanner bore and at least partially positioned between the first and second scanners; ~~and~~

10                   ~~positioning a portion of a patient between the first and second scanner bores to allow~~  
direct access to the patient by a caregiver through the patient access area formed between the first and second scanners; and

defining a lower end of the patient access area with an arced surface underneath the patient.

18. (Original) The medical imaging method of Claim 17, further comprising operating the first and second scanners in different modalities with respect to each other to obtain imaging information from the patient.

19. (Original) The medical imaging method of Claim 18, further comprising operating one of the first and second scanners in a modality obtaining imaging information representing anatomical structures of the patient.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 19 or 20, further comprising operating one of the first and second scanners in a modality obtaining imaging information representing physiologic functions of the patient.

22. (Currently Amended) A medical imaging apparatus, comprising:

a first scanning device for obtaining imaging information from a patient when the patient is disposed in a scanning position;

5        a housing which houses the first scanning device, the housing defining a drainage surface disposed below at least a portion of a patient support surface, when the patient is in the scanning position; and the, which drainage surface ~~sloping~~ slopes downwardly and away from the patient[.,] to drain fluids falling to the surface from the vicinity of the patient, when the patient is in the scanning position.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently Amended) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 22, wherein the drainage surface extends outwardly and downwardly from opposite sides of [[a]] the patient, when the patient is in the scanning position.

25. (Currently Amended) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 24, wherein the drainage surface comprises [[a]] an upwardly arced surface immediately below a patient, when the patient is in the scanning position.

26. (Currently Amended) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 22, further comprising:

a second scanning device; and

5        wherein the drainage surface extends between and separates the first and second scanning devices to form an access area for a caregiver to access [[a]] the patient disposed in the scanning position.

27. (Original) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 26, further comprising:

5 a housing supporting the first and second scanning devices and forming at least a portion of the drainage surface area between the first and second scanning devices.

28. (Currently Amended) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 27, wherein the drainage surface extends outwardly and downwardly from opposite sides of ~~[[a]]~~ the patient, when the patient is in the scanning position.

29. (Currently Amended) The medical imaging apparatus of Claim 28, wherein the drainage surface comprises:

~~[[a]]~~ an upwardly arced surface immediately below a patient, when the patient is in the scanning position.